

SOUTHWARK
HOMELESSNESS
STRATEGY
2003/04 – 2005/06



FOREWORD

This is Southwark's first ever Homelessness Strategy.

Considerable work has already been undertaken to improve prevention and other services for homeless and potentially homeless households in the borough as part of the Housing and Supporting People strategies, the Bed and Breakfast action plan and the Best Value Review of Community Housing Services action and improvement plan. However, this new Strategy allows us to develop a longer-term vision for homelessness and housing advice services. By working with partners in Social Services, Health, other statutory and voluntary sector services, and neighbouring boroughs, we aim to deliver real improvements in the quality of life for homeless and potentially homeless people.

The key aim of this first strategy is that by March 2006 we will have significantly improved our knowledge and understanding of homelessness in Southwark. We want to have developed effective inter-agency and cross-borough partnerships to tackle the problems and deliver improved outcomes for homeless and potentially homeless people in Southwark.

I particularly welcome the proposals to help vulnerable homeless and potentially homeless single people and families to keep or maintain their tenancies. These will help to minimise the risk of people becoming homeless again and again as well as being a more cost-effective approach to dealing with homelessness in the long term.

I am particularly pleased to note the progress being made in Southwark towards meeting the Government's target to eliminate the use of Bed and Breakfast hotels for homeless families other than in an emergency.

In carrying out our review and developing our strategy, we have been greatly helped by the members of Southwark Homelessness Strategy Project Board (details of membership of the board are in Appendix 1), who have made valuable contributions to both documents, both in terms of contents and in advising on consultation on the review and strategy.

Councillor Beverley Bassom
Executive Member for Housing

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Sections 1 to 4 of the Homelessness Act 2002 puts local housing authorities under a duty to:

- Carry out a homelessness review for their district
- Publish the results of their homelessness review and consult on the review
- Formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results
- Publish the first homelessness strategy by July 2003
- Publish a new homelessness strategy within five years of the last one.

We carried out a review of homelessness in Southwark between January and May 2003. The review looked at:

- The current and likely future levels of homelessness in the borough
- The resources available to Southwark Council and other public and voluntary organisations to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation and support to homeless people.

Our Homelessness Strategy is based on the findings of our review of homelessness in the borough. In the interests of brevity and clarity, our Homelessness Strategy cannot repeat all the detail on needs and resources contained in our review. It outlines some of the key findings of the review, in particular identifying areas where we need to improve services to maximise homelessness prevention, prevent repeat homelessness, and to address issues around accommodation and support for homeless people. The Strategy covers both statutory and non-statutory homelessness, mainstream and special needs groups.

In considering our Homelessness Strategy, three key factors need to be borne in mind:

- Southwark (like London as a whole) is an area of very high housing demand – increasing levels of actual homelessness are an extreme manifestation of that demand
- In Southwark, demand for affordable housing exceeds the predicted available supply for the foreseeable future, as confirmed by the preliminary results of our recent housing needs survey.
- There are a wide range of economic and social factors which affect the housing market, most of which are beyond the control of any individual local authority to influence and which must be addressed at a national or regional level.

It is important, therefore, to be realistic about what can be achieved in relation to homelessness at a local level. However, by working in partnership to make the most effective use of available resources, we are confident that we can maximise opportunities for homelessness prevention, and improve the quality of life for homeless people in Southwark.

This is Southwark's first Homelessness Strategy. Given the local resources available to carry out the review and develop our strategy, the scale of homelessness and housing demand in Southwark and the very tight timetable set out in the Homelessness Act to carry out a review of homelessness, consult on the review and develop a homelessness strategy, we recognise that:

- the scope and depth of our homelessness review needs to be further developed
- we need to consult more widely on the review and strategy.

It should also be noted that:

- There are significant overlaps between homelessness strategies and other strategies, in particular the Supporting People Strategy which covers housing support services to vulnerable people with special needs. Supporting People only went 'live' in April 2003, so it is too early to fully assess its impact on homelessness in Southwark.

- There are a number of other major changes taking place within the Council which will impact significantly on our Homelessness Strategy, including
 - major restructuring of Council services as a result of Best Value Reviews
 - a major review of Southwark's Allocations Policy.

This first Southwark Homelessness Strategy is therefore an outline strategy with a lifetime of less than three years (to March 2006).

Although this is Southwark's first Homelessness Strategy, this is not to underestimate the already considerable level of activity which has taken place over the last three years to develop homelessness services, including the development of alternatives to Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Our Homelessness Strategy is set within a wider national, regional and local strategic framework. The key drivers and links are described briefly below. Relevant objectives and targets in other local strategies and plans are referred to throughout this document.

National

- Government housing policy as set out in the 2001 policy statement 'The Way Forward for Housing' and in the Sustainable Communities Plan 2003. The Government recognises the need to address the acute shortage of affordable housing in London and the South East and is proposing targeting investment on four key areas to increase the supply of homes.
- The Government has set the following targets for all local housing authorities, and allocated funding to support local authorities achieving the targets:
 - To reduce the levels of rough sleeping within the area to two-thirds that of 1998 levels and to maintain the reduction and, where possible, to further reduce the numbers of rough sleepers
 - To have no families with children in bed and breakfast temporary accommodation by March 2004, except in emergencies
- The Homelessness Directorate has asked that authorities receiving more than a certain level of funding from the Directorate adopt one or more of the following positive outcomes in their homelessness strategies as a condition of grant
 - Reduced levels of repeat homelessness
 - Reduced levels of homelessness against main causes; and
 - Reduced inappropriate use of temporary accommodation
- Other Government policy areas are also relevant, for example: tackling social exclusion and improving the most deprived areas; reducing crime and anti-social behaviour; promoting equality; supporting young people leaving care and other vulnerable people.

Regional

- While a national issue, homelessness is most serious and acute in London. Reducing homelessness and the use of inappropriate temporary accommodation are therefore priorities of the London Housing Strategy. The strategy will set the framework for the allocation of resources for housing investment in London, through the new London Housing Board. The new resource allocation arrangements inject a degree of uncertainty into resource planning at a local level. The Strategy encourages sub-regional working to address homelessness and identifies a number of key areas for research into the causes of homelessness and support for homeless people which will inform future development of London boroughs' homelessness strategies.
- London Plan – the draft Spatial Development Strategy for London, sets challenging targets for each borough for increasing the supply of housing. Southwark's target is to provide more than 29,000 new homes by 2016, with a recommendation that at least 35% of these should be affordable homes.
- South East London Housing Strategy – Southwark Council is working in partnership with the London boroughs of Greenwich, Lewisham, Bromley and Bexley to develop a sub-regional housing

strategy. Joint working around homelessness prevention, accommodation and support is one of the key areas for the strategy. The aim is to agree the first South East London Housing Strategy by September 2003.

Local

- Community Strategy and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. These two strategies are 'owned' by Southwark Alliance (the Local Strategic Partnership) and set the overarching framework for all other Southwark strategies. Key priorities include tackling the causes and effects of poverty and improving health. Council and partner resources are increasingly targeted on the most deprived areas of the borough. Southwark's Neighbourhood Renewal Fund has allocated resources for a number of housing initiatives, including initiatives to prevent homelessness and to bring council homes up to the decent homes standard.
- Housing Strategy – this sets the context for all other housing strategies in the borough. Priorities are making the best use of existing housing; improving the condition of housing; meeting housing needs and promoting affordable housing choices; improving services. The Housing Strategy Action Plan contains key targets relating to homelessness.
- Shadow Supporting People Strategy. There are major strategic links between the Supporting People framework and the role that housing related support services can play in homelessness prevention. The strategy has identified service priorities for a wide range of homeless/potentially homeless client groups. All Supporting People funded services in the borough will be reviewed over the next three years. Reviews will be informed by priorities of our Homelessness Strategy.
- Community Housing Services Best Value Review Action Plan. This was a strategic, crosscutting review of housing advice, homelessness, lettings and special needs services in Southwark. Many of the gaps in information and services identified in our Homelessness Review have already been addressed in the Best Value Review Action Plan, as well as the need for performance improvements in some areas. A senior management panel monitors delivery of the Plan.
- Bed and Breakfast Action Plan – this has now been incorporated in the Homelessness Strategy. The focus is on eliminating the use of Bed and Breakfast for homeless families other than in an emergency.
- Rough Sleepers Strategy – this has now been incorporated into our Homelessness Strategy.
- Crime and Disorder Strategy – of particular relevance is the strategy's emphasis on preventing and tackling youth offending and preventing, and supporting victims of, hate crimes, including domestic violence.
- Teenage Pregnancy Strategy – this sets targets for housing provision for lone teenage parents and for support services. These targets are addressed in Southwark's Supporting People Shadow Strategy.
- Family Support Strategy- this is an inter-agency strategy supported by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board.
- Health Improvement Programme. This will be replaced by a three-year Local Development Plan
- Primary Care Trust Homeless Strategy – this is being developed over the next 6 months.
- Substance Misuse Strategy- this explores the relationship between drug abuse and homelessness is a priority area for action for the strategy.

CONSULTATION

Southwark Council is committed to partnership working, involving service providers and service users in developing local strategies and plans. However, we recognise that there is a need to develop consultation networks and further involve partners in our Homelessness Review and developing our Strategy, and we have identified this as a key area for improvement in our Action Plan.

Nevertheless, key partners and service users have been involved in carrying out our Review and developing our Strategy in the following ways:

- Homelessness Strategy Project Board – this was set up in September 2002 and has met monthly since January 2003. The Board includes representation from: relevant Housing business units;

Social Services; Primary Care Trust; Southwark Housing Association Group; non-statutory advice services; Shelter; voluntary organisations working with homeless people. The Board had a key role in overseeing and contributing to the Review and Strategy, including commenting on drafts of both documents.

- Drafts of the Review and Strategy have been circulated to key officers in the Council for comment. We have also carried out some in-depth consultation exercises with some Housing business units and with a few external service providers. These consultation exercises are described in more detail in our Homelessness Review.
- Drafts of the Review and Strategy have been circulated to a number of local forums for comment, together with a short questionnaire. Forums include Southwark Tenant Council and the Domestic Violence Forum.
- We have carried out in-depth consultation with some service users, focusing on the new 'priority need' categories. These are described in more detail in our Homelessness Review.
- We have explored ways in which information on homelessness and housing options can be taken out to a wider audience – these initiatives have been flagged up in our action plan.

STRUCTURE, KEY AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY

The Homelessness Act 2002 and related Government guidance requires that authorities' homelessness strategies address:

- The prevention of homelessness
- Securing accommodation for homeless people
- Providing support to homeless/potentially homeless people.

We have therefore adopted this structure for our Homelessness Strategy, but have included an additional heading – Better Information – since many of the issues around gathering information, access to information and joint-working cut across all three areas. We have included the key recommendations from the Community Housing Services Best Value Review Action and Improvement Plan in these areas, as it anticipated many of the requirements of the Homelessness Strategy.

In developing our strategic aim and key objectives, we have been mindful of the following:

- The complexity of the causes and nature of homelessness and the shortcomings in available data in respect of aiding understanding of how various socio-economic factors interrelate in the dynamics of homelessness, at both a macro and local level.
- The recognition that homelessness is at one end of a spectrum of a range of housing needs and that local authorities have a duty to consider and address all housing needs in their area. In areas of high housing demand, therefore, it is unlikely that homelessness can be eradicated through local measures alone. The root causes need to be better understood and addressed at a national, macro-economic level.
- The recognition that people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities are disproportionately represented among homeless households, but that we have only limited understanding of the factors which lead to over- or under-representation of different ethnic groups.
- Government targets related to homelessness, support for a range of vulnerable groups (including the elderly, people with disabilities, young people), sustainable communities, reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, social inclusion.
- The increasing emphasis on regional and sub-regional working and cross-agency partnerships to address housing and related socio-economic problems.
- The developing body of best practice in relation to housing strategies and sub-strategies, recognising that our Homelessness Strategy needs to be firmly embedded in our Housing Strategy.

Key aim

The key aim of this first strategy is that, by March 2006, we will have significantly improved our knowledge and understanding of homelessness in Southwark and have developed effective, cross-agency and cross-borough partnerships to tackle the problems and deliver improved outcomes for homeless and potentially homeless people in Southwark.

Key strategic objectives

- Meet Government targets on eliminating the use of bed and breakfast for families other than in an emergency, reducing rough sleeping and any further targets relevant to homelessness.
- Further research the causes of homelessness in Southwark, and in particular the factors leading to repeat homelessness.
- Improve the quality and consistency of data collection to inform development of the Homelessness Strategy.
- Fully map resources available for the prevention of homelessness and the accommodation and support of homeless households.
- Maximise the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness.
- Prevent homelessness where possible, but in particular reduce the levels of homelessness in Southwark due to eviction by family/friends and relationship breakdown due to domestic violence are the main cause of homelessness.
- Ensure that temporary accommodation is appropriate to the needs of individual homeless households.
- Work within the Supporting People framework to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people, with the aim of accessing and avoiding loss of appropriate accommodation.
- Ensure equality of access and outcome in respect of homeless services.
- Work with other London boroughs and partners to prevent homelessness and identify and meet the needs of homeless households.

Throughout this Strategy, we have set out relevant specific actions/targets in other key plans and strategies: delivery against these actions/targets will be monitored under the arrangement set out for each of those plans/strategies. We have not, therefore, included them in our Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, which focuses on further work which needs to be done to deliver the key objectives of the Homelessness Strategy. However, our Homelessness Strategy Action Plan does include targets which are in our Rough Sleepers and Bed and Breakfast Action Plans, since these have now been incorporated into our Homelessness Strategy. Relevant actions from the Best Value Review of Community Housing Services are also included as the review anticipated many of the requirements of developing a Homelessness Strategy.

The focus of our first Homelessness Strategy Action Plan is on actions which Southwark Council proposes to take and for which it has the main responsibility for delivery. A key target for Year 1 (2003/04) is to further develop the Action Plan, identifying actions and targets which key partners are leading on.

DEVELOPING, REVIEWING AND DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

This Homelessness Strategy has been agreed by Southwark's Executive Committee in July 2003. Advance notice of consideration of the Executive's consideration of the strategy was given in the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions, which enables interested parties to make representation in respect of the decision. Future changes to the strategy will go to the Executive for final approval.

A key action for year 1 of the strategy is to establish a Homelessness Forum, whose role, together with an internal homelessness panel, will be to monitor the implementation of the strategy. The lead officer responsible for the implementation of the strategy is the Head of Community Housing Services.

AVAILABILITY

The Homelessness Strategy will be formally launched at Southwark's Housing Conference in October 2003. The strategy will be published and also made available on the Council's website. Copies can be made available in other languages or formats upon request. Requests should be directed to the New Initiatives Manager, Community Housing Services, 9 Larcom Street, SE17 1RX.

2. BETTER INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This section deals with issues that have been identified in our review around gaps in and access to information. In trying to quantify the nature and extent of homelessness and the resources available to address it, we have realised there are many things we don't know. In order to develop and deliver an effective Homelessness Strategy we need to rectify these information gaps. We have also looked at how clients get access to information about the services they need to address their housing problems. In addition, we have looked at how we could improve sharing information between service providers to deliver better services. Although access to information can play a major role in preventing homelessness, it is also relevant in terms of providing accommodation and support to homeless people; therefore we have devoted a separate section to information issues

The London Housing Strategy has identified the following areas for research which will contribute to filling information gaps in Southwark's (and other London boroughs') Homelessness Strategy:

- Understanding and addressing repeat homelessness
- Quantifying the extent and nature of hidden homelessness.

Relevant key strategic objectives

- Further research the causes of homelessness in Southwark, and in particular the factors leading to repeat homelessness
- Improve the quality and consistency of data collection to inform development of the Homelessness Strategy
- Fully map resources available for the prevention of homelessness and the accommodation and support of homeless households
- Ensure equality of access and outcome in respect of homeless services.

KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

These are set out in more detail in our Homelessness Review, but in summary the main issues relating to 'better information' are:

- There are a number of areas in which data collection and analysis needs to be improved, in particular:
 - To capture information on the level of, and reasons for, repeat homelessness
 - To harmonise ethnic classifications and equalities information across council departments and other agencies
 - To monitor the effectiveness of homeless prevention initiatives.

- There are gaps in our resources information in respect of the non-statutory sector – a more detailed mapping exercise is therefore required.
- Until recently there were considerable pressures on the homelessness reception and telephone service as a result of large numbers of households visiting or telephoning to find out the status of their case due to backlogs which had developed. There have been recent improvements as a result of increased resources and organisational changes, but there is still a need for close monitoring to ensure that assessment targets are met.
- There is a need to undertake more joint training around homelessness and rehousing options to improve the quality of advice-giving across agencies and, in particular, to enable small voluntary and community organisations to benefit by such joint training.
- There is a need to develop more targeted information for a number of key partners, in particular the prison, probation, Connexions and youth offending services.
- There is a need for more effective joint working between Housing and other agencies, particularly Social Services and Health, including the need for a review of some existing joint working protocols and the development of additional protocols in some key service areas.
- Information on homelessness services and housing options needs to be better marketed and more accessible, including to black and minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities. Research has identified that there may be particular problems of hidden homelessness among some ethnic groups – for example the local Bangladeshi community. The over reliance on written communication is a major barrier to accessing information for many BME groups.

WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY DOING TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

More detail is included in our Homelessness Review. Examples of what we are currently doing to address identified problems include:

- We have a number of joint protocols with partners in place regarding services to housing applicants with serious housing/homelessness problems.
- Link officers have been identified within Housing to represent the department on Social Services and Health Partnership boards.
- We are enhancing homelessness/advice service monitoring software to record reasons for visiting/revisiting.
- We are developing the Southwark Service Centre as the first point of contact for all service enquiries. Initially its role in respect of homelessness and housing advisory services will be to signpost people to the relevant service and checking data held on computer. In the longer term some or all housing advice/housing options could be delivered by the Service Centre but in the short- medium term these services will be delivered by the newly developed Housing Options service (see Section 3- Preventing Homelessness).
- Southwark Housing Advice Forum acts as an information sharing/good practice group for local housing advice providers
- Housing's Special Needs Unit is developing 'accessing housing' training for health and voluntary sector agencies, aimed at dispelling myths and understanding housing options. The training has been trialled with mental health organisations.
- We participate in the Interagency Practitioners Forum set up by 'Under One Roof' and run by the primary health care team, which has an emphasis on networking and information exchange among frontline staff.
- The integration of Social Services and Health primary care teams in Southwark for certain client groups, and particularly for people with mental health problems, will contribute to more effective planning and service delivery for clients with special needs.
- We have substantially increased the translation and interpreting budget for Community Housing Services clients.

WHAT WE ARE PLANNING TO DO TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS:

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Year 1 (2003/04)

- Improve I.T systems to gather better data on homelessness in Southwark, e.g. reasons for repeat homelessness and main reasons for homelessness amongst repeat homeless clients; and monitor the effectiveness of homeless prevention initiatives.
- Research the links between homelessness and mental health issues, through use of funding provided to the Rough Sleepers strategy from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.
- Continue joint working between Community Housing Services and Social Services Children and Families and Community Care services, to improve joint working and information sharing about respective services and priorities.
- Develop a panel between Community Housing and Children and Families' and Community Care services to discuss cases of intentionally homeless families.
- Children and Families division to identify a link officer to liaise with Community Housing Services on difficult cases.
- Develop programme of information broadcasts with local radio stations to disseminate information about homelessness services and housing options to BME communities and young people in Southwark.
- Expand the current rehousing protocol between Housing, Police and Probation to include high-risk offenders.
- Set up a Southwark Homelessness Forum to monitor development and implementation of the Homelessness Strategy, and develop a wider consultation and information network. Review the terms of reference and functions of Southwark's internal Homeless Panel to incorporate monitoring and delivery of key Homelessness Strategy targets.
- Representation to be sought from the Domestic Violence Forum to participate in the Homelessness Forum. Housing to be represented on the Domestic Violence Forum.
- Further develop the Action Plan, identifying actions and targets which key partners are leading on.

Year 2 (2004/05)

- Finalise mapping the non-statutory sector services related to homelessness prevention, accommodation and support, and develop a homelessness and advice services directory. In particular identify links between providers, gaps in services and barriers to maximising outcomes for homelessness (subject to available resources).
- Develop a methodology to identify hidden homelessness amongst people using advice and day services, such as those provided by St Giles Trust.
- Carry out in-depth qualitative research on the main causes of homelessness, in particular repeat homelessness and the risk factors for young people becoming homeless. (Housing Research Programme).
- Jointly research the relationship between drug misuse and homelessness with the Southwark Drug and Alcohol team (subject to available resources).
- Consult with service users to establish what they believe would have helped prevent them becoming homeless and what the intervention points are, identifying culturally and needs specific interventions and prevention strategies. (Housing Research Programme)
- Provide joint training around homelessness to Social Services, Health and voluntary agencies.
- Develop protocol with local police stations identifying private tenants who are being harassed/unlawfully evicted by their landlords
- Build the capacity of local community groups, including BME advice agencies, to provide housing advice in close partnership with the Housing Options service.
- Review the effectiveness of the temporary accommodation supply and demand model (see Section 4) as an accurate tool for measuring homelessness demand.

Year 3 (2005/06)

- Further develop website information around homelessness services in Southwark and neighbouring boroughs.
- Conduct research into issues around domestic violence for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender groups and black and minority ethnic communities (subject to available resources).
- In consultation with partners and service users, review Southwark Homelessness Strategy and develop new 5-year strategy.

Best Value Review of Community Housing Services Action and Improvement Plan

- Develop a communications strategy that is accessible to all members of the community including BME households that promotes the availability of housing advice and homeless prevention services using a variety of media- e.g. community radio, poster and leaflet campaigns, newsletters etc (2003/04 and ongoing).
- Develop web-based information and advice services in response to e-Government agenda- e.g. on line application forms, on-line diagnostic housing advice etc (ongoing).
- Develop cost-effective mechanisms for keeping service users informed about the progress of their case (2003/04).
- Develop cost-effective mechanisms for tracking outcomes for vulnerable homeless or potentially homeless households to ensure the effectiveness of resettlement and tenancy sustainment (2003/04).
- Develop joint protocols between homelessness service and housing management on dealing with: vulnerable households at risk of homelessness; providing advice to housing register and transfer applicants; households evicted as a result of anti-social behaviour (2003/04).
- Develop referral protocol and discharge procedures in partnership with the Youth Offending Team (2003/04).
- Develop sharing information protocol for vulnerable households to enable relevant information to be shared with relevant agencies and rehousing organisations (2003/04).
- Set up partnership board with key partner organisations and service users to monitor the implementation of the Best Value review action plan and explore opportunities for developing more holistic services (2003-04).
- Make all key service leaflets and service standards available in community languages and in accessible formats (2003/04).

Targets in Housing Strategy Action plan 2002/03 to 2004/05

- Carry out full policy analysis of housing needs survey and agree priorities for action with partners (2003/04)
- Carry out sub-regional cross analysis of housing needs data (2003/04)
- Develop BME Housing Strategy (2003/04)
- Develop model for consultation with hard to reach groups (2003/04).

3. PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

INTRODUCTION

As has been observed in the introduction to this Strategy, it is unrealistic to presume that the incidence of homelessness in Southwark can be completely eliminated. Although there are signs that the housing market in London is faltering (i.e. price rises have stopped escalating at the rate they have done over the past five or more years and, in some boroughs, prices have fallen slightly over the last year), on a London wide basis, as in Southwark, there is every indication that, despite the emphasis on increasing

housing supply, there will continue to be a fall in the overall supply of affordable homes¹, in particular through sales under Right to Buy. Housing demand is therefore likely to continue to escalate in London and the South-East for the foreseeable future.

We have not, therefore, set an unrealistic objective of preventing homelessness in all cases, but we have committed to the Homelessness Directorate's proposed outcome of reducing homelessness against main cause/s. In Southwark, the main cause of homelessness is family/friends no longer able/willing to accommodate. Relationship breakdown due to domestic violence is another significant cause of homelessness.

Housing advice plays a major role in preventing homelessness as do support services. Our Strategy in relation to support services is described more fully in section 5.

Relevant key strategic objectives

- Meet Government targets on eliminating the use of bed and breakfast for families other than in an emergency, reducing rough sleeping and any further targets relevant to homelessness.
- Prevent homelessness where possible, but in particular reduce the levels of homelessness in Southwark due to eviction by family/friends and relationship breakdown due to domestic violence are the main cause of homelessness
- Maximise the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness
- Work within the Supporting People framework to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people, with the aim of accessing and avoiding loss of appropriate accommodation
- Ensure equality of access and outcome in respect of homeless services.
- Work with other London boroughs and partners to prevent homelessness and identify and meet the needs of homeless households

KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

These are set out in more detail in our Homelessness Review, but in summary the main issues relating to homelessness prevention are:

- In Southwark, the main cause of homelessness is family/friends no longer able/willing to accommodate. This was the main reason for homelessness for 58% of households accepted as homeless in 2002/03. Relationship breakdown with violence accounted for 8% of acceptances.
- Rent arrears is the most common reason for evictions from Council housing and it is likely that such households will subsequently have difficulty accessing social housing because of exclusion and suspension policies in respect of housing registers. While it is recognised that there must be a robust approach to managing rent arrears, this must be coupled with support for vulnerable households and access to welfare benefits and debt counselling advice.
- Homelessness prevention is cost effective. The estimated cost of a failed council tenancy is £7-10k, not including temporary accommodation costs.
- There are duplications and gaps in housing advice service provision in the borough and a need for the Council to take a more strategic role, particularly for agencies it is funding. In addition, there are gaps in the provision of specialist advice, for example for young people, some BME groups, and older people.
- The emphasis on Community Legal Services' procedures and systems may be a disincentive to small advice service providers. There is a need to develop capacity and help with networking, in particular for BME providers.
- There is evidence that substantial numbers of dispersed asylum seekers are drifting back to London once they have received positive status and this is likely to have implications for Southwark in terms of homelessness prevention.

¹ Southwark Housing Needs Survey preliminary results

- For young people in particular, there should be increased emphasis on one-stop shop type provision of information and on mediation services.
- There is a need to better target advice services on at risk groups, for example care leavers and offenders, and on 'hard to reach' groups, for example some BME communities, and daytime 'street dwellers'.
- In the longer term the structural causes of homelessness need to be better addressed by linking homeless households into education, training and employment services.
- Housing support services for vulnerable people play a major role in preventing homelessness. There is potential for better targeting of such support services under Supporting People, and a need to increase floating support schemes for some groups of potentially homeless people – these issues are dealt with in the section on Support Services.

WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY DOING TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

More detail is included in our Homelessness Review. Examples of what we are currently doing to address identified problems include:

- Southwark Housing Advice team provides a court advocacy service for private sector and housing association tenants in possession hearings, and a mediation service for private landlords and tenants, particularly focusing on preventing illegal eviction.
- Introduced a home visiting service for people threatened with eviction by friends or family.
- Establishing a Housing Options service from 1 July 2003 merging the current Housing Advice and lettings services to provide an enhanced housing advice, homeless prevention and housing options service.
- We have set targets in the Council's Equality Action Plan to reduce the incidence of homelessness due to domestic violence or racial harassment.
- Southwark has met, and exceeded, Government targets for reducing rough sleeping.
- As part of the Rough Sleepers Strategy we have jointly commissioned a Contact and Assessment team with Lambeth to provide assertive outreach services for rough sleepers.
- Also as part of the Rough Sleepers Strategy we have recruited a street homeless and rough sleepers co-ordinator on secondment from the ODPM.
- The Council is developing a corporate asylum seekers strategy.
- We are currently jointly reviewing our hospital discharge protocols for vulnerable homeless clients with Health.
- We have developed a joint rehousing protocol and risk management model around Schedule One Offenders with Police, Probation and Social Services.
- Housing's Special Needs Unit is developing links with the Connexions service and support to young people. Youth groups will be visited by workers from the Sustain team (a tenancy sustainment pilot project for people with mental health problems, a joint initiative between Housing Special Needs and South London and Maudsley hospital) to talk about the project and housing issues.
- Increased resources directed to dealing with supported accommodation nominations to maximise take up and developed a database of details of all special needs schemes in Southwark and referral criteria to maximise take up and minimise inappropriate referrals.

WHAT WE ARE PLANNING TO DO TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Year 1 (2003/04)

- Expand the home visiting service to visit every 16/17-year-old homeless applicant.
- Set up a mediation service focused on 16/17 year olds, those in danger of eviction by family/friends and those experiencing relationship breakdown.
- Develop outreach and out of hours housing advice services targeting those with a high risk of homelessness e.g. young people, particular ethnic groups.
- Special Needs resettlement officer to act as a link worker for referrals from the Youth Offending team.

- As part of the process of implementing Introductory Tenancies for new council lettings, Special Needs Resettlement and Housing Management services to jointly ensure that newly housed vulnerable households receive support to enable them to integrate into the local community.
- Expand the rehousing and risk management protocol to include potentially dangerous offenders
- Establish a joint panel with Social Services Children and Families division to look at intentionally homeless families.
- Develop targets or initiatives for homeless prevention for those whose family/friends are no longer able/willing to accommodate and those experiencing relationship breakdown with violence, in consultation with the Homelessness Forum.
- Explore the possibility of funding for homeless prevention initiatives for socially excluded families and young people from the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board.
- Develop closer links between Housing services and organisations providing support to socially excluded groups to access training and employment opportunities, such as the Elephant Angels project.
- Develop links between the Homelessness Strategy and the development of the corporate Southwark Hate Crime strategy.

Year 2 (2004/05)

- Expand the membership of the Southwark Housing Advice Forum linked to the mapping of voluntary sector providers, and to expand representation from solicitors providing housing advice.
- Re-establish the Southwark rent deposit scheme for single non-priority homeless households (subject to available resources).
- Provide small grants to intervene to prevent homelessness (subject to available resources).
- Linked to the development of joint protocols with Housing Management (see Section 2) and the Working Together for Mental Health initiative, on dealing with vulnerable households at risk of homelessness and households evicted as a result of anti-social behaviour, seek to develop a common approach with local housing association partners via Southwark Housing Association Group.
- Develop debt counselling and income maximisation advice as part of the development of the Housing Options service.
- Develop targets for a reduction in repeat homelessness, linked to the development of Supporting People services (see Section 5).

Year 3 (2005/06)

- Implement action plan arising from the results of research into the main causes of homelessness and repeat homelessness (see Section 2- Better Information).
- Develop links with Connexions service and other education, training and employment services with the aim of putting homeless people in touch with relevant services and addressing the structural causes of homelessness in the longer term.

Best Value Review of Community Housing Services Action and Improvement Plan

- Develop targets for homeless prevention and pro-active services either directly or in partnership for high-risk groups arising from the Homelessness strategy (2003/04).
- Re-establish links with Education service to provide housing advice to schools/colleges (2003/04)
- Develop referral protocol and discharge procedures in partnership with the Youth Offending Team (2003/04)
- Develop lodgings scheme for non-priority homeless and other groups (2004/05)
- Develop a joint homelessness and special needs assessment panel and assessment targets with Social Services to speed up assessments, minimise homeless applications and ensure appropriate placements (2004/05).
- Work with Private Housing Renewal service to improve access to private sector housing (ongoing).

4. ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

This section looks at issues around temporary accommodation for homeless households. A range of different types of temporary accommodation is provided by the Council, housing associations and the voluntary sector, including supported temporary accommodation. There is considerable overlap between issues around supported temporary accommodation in this section and in the next section on support services. A key aim of our Homelessness Strategy is to meet, and exceed, Government targets on the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. By comparison with some other London boroughs, Southwark has been successful in recent years in ensuring that most of our temporary accommodation for homeless people is within Southwark. As at June 2003 there were only 9 out of borough placements.

The provision of settled accommodation is dealt with more fully in Southwark's Housing Strategy (see below). Currently, temporary accommodation is designed to meet the shorter-term housing needs of people who are actually homeless. In the longer term, homeless people will require settled accommodation appropriate to their needs. Overwhelmingly, this accommodation needs to be affordable, since people who can afford market solutions to meet their housing needs do not, generally, become homeless. In addition, there are the 'hidden homeless' which includes households who are overcrowded, newly forming 'concealed households', households who are inappropriately housed and additional households resulting from relationship breakdown. These households are at risk of homelessness if their housing needs cannot be met appropriately.

The allocation of social (affordable) housing is managed through Southwark's allocations policy. In any allocations policy there needs to be some safeguard about ensuring that homeless people are housed, and this will be a key consideration for the current review of the Council's allocations policy. However the acute needs of homeless households must be balanced against the needs of other groups with chronic housing problems (overcrowding, housing-related medical needs etc), as well as initiatives to make the most effective use of the housing supply. Currently, homeless households are one of three super-priority categories for rehousing under the policy: the other two super-priority categories are decants (people who are living in Council property who need to move because their home is being refurbished or demolished) and under-occupiers. By giving priority to moving under-occupiers, larger units are released for letting to homeless and other priority households. Because of Southwark's large housing stock, homeless households have generally been housed relatively quickly in comparison with those in other London boroughs. However with the continuing decline in the supply of permanent housing this position is changing, particularly for those needing family-sized or specialist properties.

If the outcome of the allocations policy review is to increase the percentage of lettings to groups other than accepted homeless households, this will have major implications for the provision and management of temporary accommodation. Homeless households would face longer waits for permanent rehousing and the supply of longer-term temporary accommodation would need to continue to be increased as a consequence. Issues of affordability and support for households in temporary accommodation would also have to be taken into consideration.

Relevant key strategic objectives

- Meet Government targets on eliminating the use of bed and breakfast for families other than in an emergency, reducing rough sleeping and any further targets relevant to homelessness.
- Ensure that temporary accommodation is appropriate to the needs of individual homeless households.
- Work within the Supporting People framework to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people, with the aim of accessing and avoiding loss of appropriate accommodation
- Ensure equality of access and outcome in respect of homeless services.
- Work with other London boroughs and partners to prevent homelessness and identify and meet the needs of homeless households

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

These are set out in more detail in our Homelessness Review, but in summary the main issues relating to the provision of temporary accommodation are:

- The need to speed up the time taken for homeless decision-making in order to meet the Government's Bed & Breakfast targets, and to make the most effective use of other forms of temporary accommodation.
- The need to develop a more strategic approach to temporary accommodation supply and demand.
- Ensure that there are robust temporary accommodation management arrangements in place, for example to minimise the number of people overstaying in temporary accommodation (e.g. where the Council does not have a homelessness duty or the duty is discharged), reduce void turnaround times etc.
- To ensure that there are arrangements in place between Temporary Accommodation and the neighbourhood housing offices to support homeless households placed in estate-based temporary accommodation and minimise the risk of social exclusion.
- There is a need to expand the home visiting service to homeless at home clients to review their circumstances.
- To meet targets around the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, we need to continue to increase the supply of alternative, better quality, more cost-effective temporary accommodation.
- There is a need for more appropriate long-term temporary accommodation for non-emergency use.
- The Council's hostels need investment to bring them up to a better standard and, where possible, to increase the number of self-contained and wheelchair accessible units.
- The additional categories of homeless households deemed to be in priority need under homelessness legislation together with the anticipated fall in the supply of affordable lettings suggest that there may be an increased need for temporary accommodation for vulnerable single homeless people. It will be essential to provide both supported accommodation and floating support for these clients.
- There is a lack of suitable temporary accommodation people with physical disabilities, and supported temporary accommodation for people with severe mental health problems, and people with substance misuse and behaviour problems.
- As part of the Supporting People scheme reviews there is a need to review nomination arrangements to supported housing units and how move on can be achieved from schemes to make maximum use of available resources and target services to those most in need.
- Supported housing projects for homeless people and offenders can face particular problems obtaining planning permission and there is a need to work with local communities, police and other agencies when commissioning services.

WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY DOING TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

More detail is included in our Homelessness Review. Examples of what we are currently doing to address identified problems include:

- With the help of funding from the Bed and Breakfast Unit, we have started a programme to bring 250 additional private sector leased properties into use as temporary accommodation. As at May 2003 there were 55 homeless families in Bed and Breakfast and we are confident about achieving the Government's target of nil use of Bed and Breakfast for families other than in an emergency in advance of the March 2004 deadline.
- Established a new post of Temporary Accommodation Initiatives Manager to increase opportunities for developing new sources of temporary accommodation and to ensure value for money.
- Introduced a temporary accommodation supply and demand model.
- Provide a removals service and furniture package for homeless households moving into permanent accommodation.
- We have put in place tight targets for reducing the time taken to make homeless decisions (target – 95% of decisions made within 33 working days by 2007/08 and 80% of decisions made within 20 working days by 2007/08).
- We maximise the use of 'homeless at home' to reduce the demand for temporary accommodation.
- Reviewed temporary accommodation placement procedures to move to a more strategic use of temporary accommodation i.e. use of non self-contained accommodation on an emergency basis for assessment only, and self-contained accommodation post homeless acceptance and pre-permanent rehousing.
- There are a number of actions in place, or being developed, to provide support to homeless households living in estate-based temporary accommodation. These include regular liaison meetings between the Temporary Accommodation service and the neighbourhood housing office.
- We provide same day assessments for vulnerable homeless people with mental health problems, ensuring the most appropriate temporary accommodation placement possible.
- We take the support needs of homeless households into account when placing them in temporary accommodation, subject to available resources. A family support worker provides support to vulnerable families in temporary and move on accommodation. A second worker is in the process of being recruited.
- We have developed a rent deposit scheme for accepted homeless households. As at May 2003 there were 15 homeless households accommodated through the rent deposit scheme.
- We participated in London Landlord's day.

WHAT WE ARE PLANNING TO DO TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Year 1 (2003/04)

- No families with children in bed and breakfast, except in an emergency and have no more than 30 single people in bed and breakfast accommodation by 31 March 2004.
- To have sufficient units of temporary accommodation to meet projected needs as identified by the supply and demand model by the end of 2003/04.
- Jointly develop joint estate inspections between the Temporary Accommodation service, neighbourhood housing offices and residents' associations.
- Develop a temporary accommodation information pack, including details of local residents' associations, local schools, G.P surgeries etc.
- Southwark to link up to the London-wide NOTIFY IT software (NOTIFY is a web-based notification and information system whose primary role is to notify relevant services of the placement or movement of statutorily homeless households living in temporary accommodation in London).
- In light of the stock condition survey, develop a 5-year investment programme to improve temporary accommodation hostel provision to meet decent homes standards and increase self-contained units (ongoing).

- Assess the impact of any changes to Southwark's housing allocation policy on homeless households and the provision of temporary accommodation, including future management arrangements.
- Using funding from the ODPM, jointly develop a shelter for rough sleepers with St Mungo's, providing beds for around 3 weeks to provide assessment, assistance with claiming benefits and ensuring move-on.
- To work with housing associations, the Housing Corporation and other SE London boroughs to maximise investment of Temporary Social Housing Grant in Southwark.
- Review of commissioning arrangements to ensure value for money and to standardise arrangements with housing associations for under-writing voids and bad debts in temporary accommodation schemes.
- Put in place financial and monitoring systems to allow for a review of the financial implications (including issues of affordability for temporary accommodation residents) of the different temporary accommodation models.

Year 2 (2004/05)

- To have sufficient units of temporary accommodation to meet projected needs as identified by the supply and demand model.
- Continue to provide a rent deposit scheme for accepted homeless households, assisting up to 95 families by March 2004 (subject to available resources).
- To continue a programme of procuring temporary accommodation to ensure the above as well as ensuring lost units are replaced (e.g. lease ends, handback of estate voids).
- To increase support to homeless households in long-term temporary accommodation.
- Explore and possibly pilot at least one 'temporary to permanent' initiative.

Year 3 (2005/06)

- To have sufficient units of temporary accommodation to meet projected needs as identified by the supply and demand model.
- To continue a programme of procuring temporary accommodation, including ensuring lost units are replaced.
- Continue to provide a rent deposit scheme for accepted homeless households (subject to available resources).

Best Value Review of Community Housing Services Action and Improvement Plan

- Bring 250 additional private sector leasing units on stream for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households (2002/03- 2003/04)
- Monitor void turnaround times for all forms of temporary accommodation. Targets are: 95% of hostel voids ready for letting within 48 hours by 2007/08; 90% of estate voids ready for letting within 10 working days by 2007/08.

Targets in other relevant action plans

- Start construction of one new temporary accommodation scheme for homeless families (Housing Strategy Action Plan 2003/04).
- Single homeless people with support needs – carry out an ongoing programme of reprovision of shared hostels to self-contained cluster schemes with support attached (Supporting People Strategy).
- In relation to single homeless people with support needs, develop more effective and strategic allocation and move on within the sector (Supporting People Strategy)

SETTLED ACCOMMODATION

KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

Our Homelessness Review did not explore issues around settled accommodation in any depth as it is recognised that the key issues relevant to homelessness of maximising use of the existing supply of housing and increasing the supply of housing are covered in detail in Southwark's Housing Strategy Year 5 (2002/03) Update. The issues around maximising the use of and increasing the supply of affordable accommodation are no different in relation to homeless households than to any other group in housing need. The key areas for action are:

- Reducing the number of empty homes in all tenures. This includes: reducing the time taken to make empty Council and housing association homes ready for reletting; investing in bringing longer term empty homes back into use.
- Better matching of needs and housing supply. This includes: mobility schemes to encourage households to move to low demand areas; mutual exchanges between social housing tenants; encouraging under-occupiers in social housing to move to smaller homes; ensuring appropriate adaptations to enable older people and people with disabilities to remain in their own homes.
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing. This includes: building new Council and housing association homes; incentives to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation; increasing the supply of low cost home ownership.

All these areas are addressed in Southwark's Housing Strategy which has been assessed by the Government Office for London as 'Fit for Purpose'. This assessment recognises that we have a good understanding of housing needs in the area and an effective strategy to address those needs within the resources available. Our Housing Strategy has a detailed Action Plan up to March 2005 and we have drawn out the targets in the Action Plan which are most relevant to our Homelessness Strategy.

Since Southwark Council is one of the largest landlords in the country, our annual supply of available lettings still exceeds the number of annual homeless acceptances. However there is still a mismatch in terms of supply and demand, with particular shortages of family-sized and specialist properties for people with disabilities. Additionally there are many other households with pressing needs for rehousing and we have to address competing priorities. In particular, we would be severely constrained in our ability to meet priorities in our investment programme for regenerating and improving the Council's homes – around 50% of which do not meet the Government's decent homes standard. We have therefore opted to give homeless households a high priority for rehousing but not absolute priority. This position may be subject to alteration on completion of the current Housing Allocations Policy review.

In terms of our Homelessness Strategy, we are looking at options to increase housing supply and housing choice for homeless households.

WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY DOING TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

More detail is included in our Housing Strategy Year 5 (2002/03) update. Examples of what we are currently doing to address identified problems include:

- We set targets to reduce the time taken to relet Council homes.
- We have an under-occupation scheme which provides incentives for Council and housing association tenants occupying larger properties to move to smaller homes.
- We have targets to bring empty Council and private sector homes back into use.
- We have a number of mobility schemes for homeless and other housing applicants.
- We have targets for new affordable homes.
- We are reviewing our allocations policy.

- We have reviewed and relaunched our rent deposit scheme to enable accepted homeless households to access private rented accommodation.

WHAT WE ARE PLANNING TO DO TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Year 1 (2003/04)

- Extend the LAWN scheme to accepted homeless people, and review financial incentives and marketing of the scheme.

Targets in Housing Strategy Action Plan

- Implement Housing Capacity Action Plan (2003/04)
- Improve void turn round time of general needs Council homes (targets for 2003/04 and 2004/05)
- Bring longer term empty Council homes (major voids with high repair costs) back into use (targets for 2003/04)
- Complete 8 new Council homes by converting non-residential property into residential (2003/04)
- Incorporate monitoring of void turn round time of housing association homes into annual performance review of housing associations in Southwark (2003/04)
- Bring private sector empty homes back into use (targets for 2003/04 and 2004/05)
- Achieve 80 moves per year through the under-occupation scheme (targets for 2003/04 and 2004/05)
- Audit and review nominations arrangements with housing associations (2003/04)
- Establish database of all housing association stock in Southwark (2003/04)
- In partnership with housing associations provide additional affordable homes (targets for 2003/04 and 2004/05)
- Complete review of affordable housing planning policy (2003/04)
- Implement outcomes of Allocations Policy review (targets for 2003/04 and 2004/05)
- Ensure shared ownership register in place and used for referrals to new schemes (2003/04)

5. SUPPORT SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

There are many strategic links between the Supporting People framework and the role that housing-related support services can play in preventing homelessness. Supporting People is the strategic framework for commissioning and monitoring supported housing services. Southwark's first (Shadow) Supporting People Strategy was launched in September 2002 and addresses a range of issues around prevention of homelessness, accommodation and support for homeless and potentially homeless vulnerable people and therefore addresses many of the problems highlighted in our Homelessness Review. The Strategy was rated as 'Excellent' by the ODPM. It is prudent to allow sufficient time for the Supporting People Strategy to be implemented and the cycle of service reviews to be completed (which will lead to reconfiguring of some services), before setting further targets in relation to support services and homelessness. For our Homelessness Strategy we have therefore identified relevant priorities and actions in Southwark's Supporting People Strategy, plus a small number of additional targets to reflect continuing actions around minimising rough sleeping, and improving access to health care services.

Relevant key strategic objectives

- Meet Government targets on eliminating the use of bed and breakfast for families other than in an emergency, reducing rough sleeping and any further targets relevant to homelessness.
- Ensure that temporary accommodation is appropriate to the needs of individual homeless households.
- Work within the Supporting People framework to address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people, with the aim of accessing and avoiding loss of appropriate accommodation
- Ensure equality of access and outcome in respect of homeless services.
- Work with other London boroughs and partners to prevent homelessness and identify and meet the needs of homeless households

KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR HOMELESSNESS REVIEW

These are set out in more detail in our Homelessness Review and Shadow Supporting People Strategy. Many of the issues relating to supported housing can be found in the Accommodation section above. Other issues identified are:

- There is a need for a continued expansion in tenancy sustainment schemes for people who are vulnerable and living in general needs accommodation, to prevent them losing their tenancies.
- There needs to be better signposting of health and other support services for homeless people.

WHAT WE ARE CURRENTLY DOING TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

More detail is included in our Homelessness Review and in our Shadow Supporting People Strategy. Examples of what we are currently doing to address identified problems include:

- Social Services family support strategy is an inter-agency strategy targeting a number of vulnerable groups, including victims of domestic violence.
- Housing Special Needs has developed several specialist floating support schemes, a number of which are joint funded with Social Services and Health, and piloted a tenancy support scheme for people with mental health problems in general needs housing (Sustain).
- Developed a tenancy support service for domestic violence victims who wish to remain in the family home – demand far exceeded the places available. We are also developing a short stay high security refuge in the borough where domestic violence victims can evaluate their future options, including taking legal remedies.
- Carried out a review of the Single Homeless Nominations and Allocations Group (SHNAG), which provides a housing quota to supported housing agencies in the borough, to maximise the supply of suitable supported housing for vulnerable homeless people in Southwark and to ensure move-on.
- Introduced regular welfare visits for temporary accommodation residents, including referrals to the resettlement or other services for those in need of additional support.
- Special Needs offers a support and resettlement service to homeless people with sensory or physical disabilities, people leaving mental health hospitals and institutions, people with drug issues and people with HIV/AIDS. They also offer advice, assistance and support assessment for teenage parents and victims of domestic violence. The service consists of advice to other professionals, helping the applicant through the housing access system, identifying blockages, finding suitable temporary accommodation etc. The demand for the service outstrips the resources available. However there is general agreement among agencies that there are some people who are simply too vulnerable to be serviced in this way.
- Special Needs hold fortnightly meetings with SLAM to sort out housing issues for people being discharged from mental hospitals who can return to their homes and to raise mental health problems reported from neighbourhood housing offices.

WHAT WE ARE PLANNING TO DO TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Year 1 (2003/04)

- Continue to sustain reductions in rough sleeping through the development of outreach and support services (Year 1 and ongoing).
- Implement outcomes from the review of the Single Homeless Nominations and Allocations Group (SHNAG).

Year 2 (2004/05)

- Ensure that homeless households in temporary forms of accommodation have access to health care services (and ongoing).

Supporting People Strategy

Year 1 (2003/04)

- Review of services for older people (the main issues in relation to homelessness are likely to be around delayed discharge from hospital, and lack of suitable accommodation for older people with complex needs).
- Review of services for people with disabilities
- Review of domestic violence sector to ensure that identified performance indicators are met or exceeded and that services deliver improved outcomes for victims of domestic violence.
- Draw up specification for a local refuge targeting Southwark women, with a holistic approach to providing advice and support.
- Review the effectiveness of floating support services for victims of other hate crimes, and ensure provision of support services to victims of hate crimes in all housing tenures.

Year 2- 2004/05

- Review of the single homelessness sector, including ex-offenders, people with drug and alcohol misuse problems, floating support services, services for young people. This will also include addressing issues of ensuring move-on from supported housing schemes.

Year 3- 2005/05

- Review of the mental health sector.

Homelessness- related Supporting People development priorities as outlined in the Shadow Strategy include:

Mental health:

- Increased provision, including for people with dual diagnosis, and greater choice of provision
- Re-provisioning of shared hostels to provide more self-contained facilities
- Expansion of floating support and crisis intervention services
- Funding for planned discharge from hospital.

Learning disability

- Floating support services to prevent tenancy breakdown.

Physical disability

- Development of a short-term supported housing scheme for rehabilitation purposes for people leaving residential care before moving into general needs mobility housing.

Single people with support needs

- Improvements to move-on and referral arrangements to maximise use of existing provision

- Expand tenancy support to single people with support needs living in the community and particularly in the social housing sector, to avoid tenancy breakdown
- Establish the support needs of residents in supported housing to ensure that services are appropriate and adequately resourced, particularly for clients with complex needs and challenging behaviours.

People with alcohol problems

- Ensure that hostel provision is adequately resourced to deal with clients with alcohol and dual diagnosis problems
- Development of tenancy sustainment to avoid tenancy breakdown
- Increased self-contained supported accommodation, both on a 'wet' and 'dry' basis
- Work with other agencies, such as Neighbourhood renewal, to tackle street drinking hot spots

People with drug problems

- Development of self-contained supported accommodation, both temporary and permanent.
- Continued programme of reprovisioning existing hostels.
- Services adequately resourced to deal with people with dual diagnosis, history of offending and young people with substance misuse problems.
- Development of floating support services for drug users in general needs housing.

Offenders

- Resettlement support for both young and adult offenders
- Support services for offenders with other problems, e.g. mental health, alcohol misuse.
- Assess the effectiveness of outreach support services, particularly around management of risk.

Young people at risk and care leavers

- Increased joint planning of provision between Supporting People team and Care Leavers services.
- Development of services for very vulnerable young people and those with challenging behaviours
- Increased self-containment in existing provision
- Develop closer links with training, education and employment services etc.
- Resettlement and floating support for young people moving into permanent housing to prevent tenancy breakdown.

Refugees

- Development of additional support for refugees or asylum seekers moving into general needs housing.

Homeless families with support needs

- Develop floating support services assisting families with support needs who have either recently been housed, where there is a history of repeat homelessness, or at fear of losing their tenancy (Supporting People Strategy)

6. RESOURCING THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Adopting a more preventative approach to homelessness as well as developing cost-effective alternative forms of temporary accommodation to Bed and Breakfast will deliver savings in the longer term to Southwark Council's budget. Southwark has adopted an 'invest to save' approach to homelessness in recent years, which has seen savings from the reduced use of Bed and Breakfast

hotels being reinvested in developing services for homeless people. There is potential for further savings and redirection of resources as a result of eliminating the use of bed and breakfast.

Southwark was also successful in bidding for funding for initiatives to minimise the use of Bed and Breakfast from the Bed and Breakfast Unit and Homelessness Directorate for 2002/03 and the current year. However the Bed and Breakfast Unit has advised that it is unlikely that there will be any funding for future years, given that the expectation is that authorities will redirect Bed and Breakfast savings into developing preventative services. It is possible that further funding will be available from the Homelessness Directorate in 2004/05.

A number of service improvements are planned as a result of the Homelessness Strategy. Some of these are at no additional cost, or minimal cost. However some, including the continuing expansion of private sector leased accommodation, which is currently being funded by the Bed and Breakfast Unit, will require long term funding. Growth bids will be considered as part of Southwark's 2004/05 budget setting process.

It should also be remembered that the Homelessness Strategy is a joint strategy between Southwark and its partners. There may be opportunities to maximise use of resources by pooling funding for particular initiatives, and this will be explored as part of the remit of the Homelessness Forum with partner agencies. One such initiative to be explored further is the possibility of funding for homeless prevention initiatives for socially excluded families and young people from the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board.

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2003/04 TO 2005/06- Key milestones

Action/milestone	Target date	Approx. cost & funding source	Outcome	Lead organisation / officer	Links to other strategies/plans
Develop additional units of private sector leased accommodation	Year 1- March 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £330k, Bed & Breakfast Unit 2003/04. £250k 2004/05 & 2005/06- subject to available resources 	Meet Government targets on the use of bed & breakfast. Nil use of Bed & Breakfast by homeless families other than in an emergency by March 2004	Temporary Accommodation Manager, Community Housing Services	Corporate priority- customer focus, performance management
Develop rent deposit scheme for accepted homeless households	Year 1- March 2004 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2003/04- £124k, of which £44k funded by Bed & Breakfast Unit & remainder through savings 2004/05 and 2005/06- subject to available resources 	Meet Government targets on the use of bed & breakfast. Nil use of Bed & Breakfast by homeless families other than in an emergency by March 2004	Housing Options Manager, Community Housing Services	Corporate priority- customer focus, performance management
Develop rent deposit scheme for non-priority homeless households	Year 2 and ongoing	£50k, subject to available resources	Maximise the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness. Prevent homelessness where possible	Housing Options Manager, Community Housing Services	Corporate priority- customer focus
Develop small scale initiatives and grants targeted at intervening to prevent homelessness	Year 2 and ongoing	£50k, subject to available resources	Maximise the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness. Prevent homelessness where possible	Housing Options Manager, Community Housing Services	Corporate priority- customer focus
Voluntary sector mapping exercise	Year 2- March 2004	£20K, subject to available resources	Fully map resources available for the prevention of homelessness and the accommodation & support of homeless households and maximise the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness	New Initiatives Manager, Community Housing Services	Corporate priority- customer focus, equalities

MEMBERSHIP OF HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY PROJECT BOARD-
Shelter, London

Appendix 1

Simon Lawson

Housing Advice Manager, Community
Housing Services

Hakeem Osinaike

Housing Needs Manager, Community
Housing Services

Andy Loxton

Supporting Peoples Manager, Community
Housing Services

Hamid Khan

Casework Manager, Community Housing
Services

John O' Hagan

Business Manager [Children], Social
Services

Daniel Currie

Director – St Giles Trust

Kate Sinar

Special Needs Co-ordinator, Community
Housing Services

Sue Field

Commissioner for Homeless People,
Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Lambeth,
Southwark & Lewisham PCT.

John Schofield

Director – Family Housing Group

John Guest

Head of Social inclusion [Education]

Graham Peck

Manager Three Boroughs Primary Care
Trust

Pat Sullivan

Chair – Tenant Council

Osi Okponobi

Service Manager - Peckham Citizens'
Advice Bureau

Antoinette Stasaitis

Divisional Housing Manager, Housing
Management.

Paula Bennett

Thames Reach Bondway

Sharon Roberts

Southwark Domestic Violence Forum

Concern expressed at the consultation timetable. Specific issues raised included:

- the need to ensure that the Homelessness Forum has effective links with the Domestic Violence forum.
- The strategy must:
 - ensure effective consultation with voluntary and community organisations.
 - address issues of domestic violence and the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender community and groups with special needs, e.g. learning disabilities.

Community Safety Unit

Issues raised:

- The need to ensure that the strategy addresses the links between drug misuse and homelessness.
- The need to ensure close working between Housing and the Youth Offending team.
- Concerns that those not willing to report incidents of hate crime to the police may be penalised if applying as homeless.
- The need for tenancy support for street drinkers and rough sleepers.
- The need for holistic solutions.

Southwark Probation Service

Issues raised:

- The need to consider the housing and support needs of offenders, as a means of preventing re-offending and risk of homelessness.
- Support for reviewing joint protocol between Housing, Police and Probation to include potentially dangerous offenders.
- Support for proposed actions around vulnerable single people, particularly those with complex needs.
- The need to address the silting-up of supported housing schemes by ensuring move-on.

Southwark London and Maudsley NHS Trust

Issues raised:

- The need for a greater emphasis on mental health, and on substance misuse
- Support for measures to improve the effectiveness of joint working, including joint training initiatives, and in particular the development of a joint homelessness and special needs panel.
- Support for an expansion of outreach and tenancy sustainment services.

Southwark Social Services- Children and Families service

Issues raised:

- The need to develop effective joint working mechanisms between Housing and Children and Families' division.
- The need to provide support services for eligible asylum seekers and refugees moving into permanent accommodation.

ODPM- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The Bed and Breakfast Unit and Homelessness Directorate are located in the ODPM.

Supporting People- the new Government initiative for funding and co-ordinating supported housing services, which were previously funded through a range of different sources. Supported housing services are now jointly commissioned by the local authority, Health and Probation services, and are funded through a single Supporting People 'pot' of money.

Rough sleepers- people who are sleeping on the streets, in abandoned vehicles etc

Bed and Breakfast accommodation- bed and breakfast hotels used as temporary accommodation for homeless people.

Private sector leasing- properties leased from private sector landlords, either by local authorities or by housing associations, to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households.

'Wet' and 'dry' provision- 'wet' provision refers to services which enable people with alcohol problems to drink on the premises, under supervision. Such provision focuses on minimising harm for those who would otherwise not engage with services. 'Dry' provision refers to services for people with alcohol problems which do not allow drinking on the premises.

Tenancy support/sustainment- support services to enable vulnerable households to obtain and sustain a tenancy, for example assistance with claiming benefits, assistance with attaining life skills- e.g. budgeting.

Floating support- similar to tenancy sustainment. Support is provided for a specific period or as long as the individual requires it, and then transfers to another household.

Dual diagnosis- people with more than one special need e.g. mental health and alcohol misuse problems.